

DJE3E - JOURNALISM

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Books for Reference:

1. "Professional Journalism" M.V. Kamath
2. "Mass Communication in India" Keval J. Kumar (Section II Pages 41-121)

UNIT 1

What is journalism?

“Journalism includes the writing and editing of newspaper and periodicals...The gathering and transmission of news, business management of journals and advertising in all its phases are often thought of as coming within the field of journalism and following the advent of radio and television, there is a trend toward including all communication dealing with current affairs in the term”.

Some definitions of Journalism

1. “Journalism is instant history, an account of history as it is being made.”
(Anonymous)

2. “Journalism is a report of things as they appear at the moment of writing, not a definitive study of a situation”. (Anonymous)

3. “Journalism is a contemporary report of the changing scene, intended to inform readers of what is happening around them.” (Anonymous)

What is journalism? ‘Journal’ is a French word derived from the Latin term ‘diurnalis’ which means ‘daily’. The word’s first newspaper was perhaps the Acta Diurna - a handwritten bulletin put up daily in the Forum in ancient Rome. In course of time, pamphlets, periodicals, news books, gazettes, tracts, reviews, essays, etc., came to be called newspapers. The authors of these were called ‘essayists’, ‘news writers’ and later ‘journalists’. The Mughal rulers in India had news letters read to them called “vaquianaves” in court, every evening

Several changes took place since then culminating in the advent of journalism. It grew by leaps and bounds and has now blossomed into a profession. It has become a subject of study in universities. Naturally experts in the field have attempted to define Journalism and analyse its various dimensions in the modern context.

THE ROLE OF THE PRESS

The Press is often called the Fourth Estate. The term ‘The Press’ refers to printed periodicals or the newspapers, in general. Every newspaper has its own identity and wins the loyalty of its reader through a combination of words, pictures, presentation techniques, distinctive comments and exclusive news stories. Almost every newspaper lives on criticism and exposure of those who abuse their authority, misuse their powers and resort to corruption in various ways. Newspapers also contain public grievances and reflect public opinion. They are thus the voice of the people – ‘vox populi’ – and a builder of public opinion. Napoleon

described the press-person as a grumbler, a censorer, a giver of advice, a regent of sovereigns, a tutor of nation'. "Four hostile newspapers," he said, "were to be feared more than a thousand bayonets".

The press is the common man's university – it is pulpit, theatre and councilor, all in one. As the press is responsible to the high trust placed in it, it should play a positive and constructive role expected of it. Journalism is a noble profession – it enlightens people, broadens their vision and discourages sectarian, communal and other divisive trends.

It is rather unfortunate that some newspapers indulge in substandard journalism. They distort truth, exaggerate juicy news reports, violate all ethical standards and fawn at the feet of Mammon. They use their columns for exploiting vulnerable people who cannot be regarded as good, honest citizens. They are the black sheep in the profession – the Yellow press. Truly did Jefferson divide the contents of a newspaper thus: 'First chapter, truth; Second chapter, probabilities; Third, possibilities; Fourth, lies; and the First is the shortest'. These newspapers are anti-social elements. What they do is worse than black - marketing or smuggling. They betray society for petty personal gains for themselves. They resort to sensationalism, inflame passions, incite sensitive people and act against public interest and welfare. They create disharmony and discord. It is better to ban such undesirable journalism than encourage it.

Newspapers serve as a powerful link between the Government and the people. They convey Government policies and action to the people. They speak up for the people and voice the grievances against mismanagement of public affairs at various levels and thus make the authorities aware of public feelings. Newspapers thus complete the chain of action and reaction. The Press should not be afraid of upholding and supporting a just and righteous cause, because it may antagonize the governmental machinery or some influential interests. The Press has to be eternally vigilant to protect the rights of the workers, backward people, the minorities and the suppressed sections of the society. It should project a correct perspective of events and promote the formation of a healthy public opinion. The Press is the voice of the people, the conscience-keeper of the society and the watch-dog of the nation. The role of the press is great indeed.

The Editor and His Men

An editor is the key man in a newspaper. The identity or personality of a newspaper is attributed to its editor. In early times a newspaper used to have just an editor, doing all sorts of work. He was reporter, sub-editor, proof-reader and everything else – all rolled into one.

He had to shoulder all the burdens of running a newspaper. He was a much harassed person in his against vested interests and the draconian laws against the press.

Of course the condition of the editor has improved over the years. A big newspaper has a hierarchy of chief editor, editors, sub-editors, chief reporters, proof readers and technicians, each monitoring a particular area of work. Division of labour has become the order of the day in newspaper concern as in every other field.

The Editor has to do a lot of administrative work. Much of his time is occupied in directing the complex machinery of his newspaper as well as attending the conferences with heads of departments. He commissions writers to write articles for his newspaper. He decides the subjects for the leaders and the lines along which they have to run, especially when some contribute leaders and special articles to their columns two or three days a week. In this way the life of an editor is not an idle one.

He can influence the people for good directly through editorials and indirectly through various feature items in his newspaper.

Editorial

According to Harry, an editorial should have three parts: 1. Statement of the subject, issues or problem; 2. Comment on the subject; 3. Conclusion or solution drawn from the comment.

The editorial is the mirror of a newspaper's opinion. Hence the editorial policy should be based on fairness and accuracy. A good editor gives an honourable treatment even to the opponents of his newspaper and wins general popularity and esteem for it.

A leader writer should be able to write powerfully on any subject. He should express the considered judgment of his newspaper on any issues. He should not thrust his personal views which may be whimsical. The leading articles can be used with advantage by launching a relentless campaign against many social, political and economic evils rampant in the country.

An editorial should be objective. Generally important national newspapers write their leading articles without vested interests. They do not write political, social and religious controversies in a partisan manner. Their editorials are broad minded and unbiased. "Writing good editorial is chiefly telling the people what they think, not what the writer thinks" according to Arthur Brisbane.

A leader, i.e leading article, should be the true leader of thoughts in a newspaper.

A leading article should be written in such a way as to make a wide appeal. It should touch and move the largest number of readers. However, good editorials, written in an understandable style, are read with interest.

Editorial and leader writers would do well to deal not only with political issues but also with general topics which concern day-to-day life.

The chief duty of an editorial writer is to provide information, guidance and sound judgement that are essential to the healthy functioning of a democracy.

An editorial writer should be frank and bold. He should speak out without fear or favour. He should proclaim the truth even at the risk of danger. He should not be afraid of writing against the administration or government to safeguard the rights and freedom of the citizen. He should not compromise with public interest. An editor who clinches from the right course is unworthy to hold his high post. An editor who hesitates to fight for the right cause will stand self-condemned as a shirker of public responsibility. An editor must maintain the high principles of honesty and integrity to enhance the reputation of his paper.

THE SUB-EDITOR

Importance of sub-Editor

There is a woman behind every great man, there is a sub-editor behind every successful newspaper. 'Any bloody fool can write. It needs a heaven born genius to edit', says H. W. Nevinnson. That shows the value of a sub-editor. The sub-editor plays significant role in the publication of a newspaper.

The sub-editor has to pay maximum attention to the main news page or front page.

The sub-editor has to serve as a link between the editorial room and the composing room.

It is the duty of the sub-editor to enlist the co-operation of all the staff connected with him in one way or another.

Requirements/ qualifications of a good sub-editor

A sub-editor profession requires special talents. It needs knowledge at various levels and possession of certain qualities of head and heart. The following is a list of the requirements/qualifications of a good sub-editor:

1. The key words in the job descriptions of a good sub-editor are responsibility, proficiency and resourcefulness.
2. He must be able to follow mass interest and have an acquaintance with sectional interest.
3. He must have a vast general knowledge of men and matters. He must know about pop singers, cabinet ministers, film stars and company bosses.
4. He must have an analytical mind and a sense of proportion.

5. He must be able to visualise not only the development of a story but also its likely impact on the reader.
6. He should have the knack of feeling the pulse of the reader and should respect their sentiments.
7. He must know the ins and outs of the journalistic world. He must be thoroughly familiar with every department. He must have a sound knowledge of the mechanical processes of newspaper production. He must have a firm grasp of the basic principles of typography. He must have a flair for type, design and make-up.
8. He must be able to boil down, i.e. cut short and shape up a long, tedious report so as to make it capture the reader's attention and keep him absorbed down to the last word.
9. He should have a flair for language so that he can spot out a bad copy and rewrite it better.
10. He should ruthlessly cut down verbiage and clichés.
11. He should have a sense of humour. 'subbing' is not a scientific operation of cutting and shaping news material. It is dressing and make-up as well. A good sub-editor should carry a lot of humour, to spice his product and make it enjoyable to the readers.
12. He must be a man with team spirit, not a lone plodder.
13. He must have a good memory.
14. He must be capable of quick decision-making.
15. He should have physical and mental stamina to withstand the stress and strain of his task.
16. He must be well-versed in law, especially laws pertaining to libel.
17. He must be free from any bias or prejudice.

In addition to these a good sub-editor should have some of the qualities required of a good report as well, as listed below.

Qualities of a good sub-editor (as for a good reporter)

- 1) News sense: A good sub-editor should have a sharp news sense. He is the first reader of a reporter's copy, and if the reporter has made a let-up in the news, the sub-editor has to smell it. A bad copy may have the most important element of the story buried in the fifth paragraph. The sub-editor should have the nose for news to bring it to the first paragraph.
- 2) Clarity: A sub-editor is the judge of clarity of the reporter's copy. A good sub-editor will never allow a copy to escape him unless the meaning is crystal clear.

- 3) Objectivity: A sub-editor should not take sides but try to cover all the different points of view to achieve balance in a story.
- 4) Accuracy: A sub-editor should be a stickler for correctness, as even a minor mistake may damage the newspaper's credibility. He must check facts, names and figures. If anything is doubtful, he must leave it out. It is better not to say a thing than to say it wrong.
- 5) Curiosity: A sub-editor must have an insatiable curiosity. He should read as much as possible to improve his knowledge of various subjects constantly.
- 6) Alertness: A sub-editor has to be alert while working at the news desk. Lack of alertness will lead to mistakes which will render him awkward in the reader's eyes.
- 7) Speed: A sub-editor has to work fast. He cannot sit with a copy for long. He has to clear a lot of copy. A slow sub-editor is a curse to the news desk and is treated with contempt.
- 8) Doubting streak: A sub-editor should not take things for granted. He should have a doubting mind. It is part of his duty to entertain doubts about many things-facts, language and style, shape, policy, etc. But they should be genuine doubts and he must make every effort to clear them. He should not hesitate to approach any of his colleagues to ask about any doubt, standing on false prestige.

He should be wary of the dubious tactics of politicians and advertisers. He not allow a reporter or anyone else to pass on advertisement in the guise of news. He should cut out disguised or indirect publicity and / or propaganda.

- 9) Calmness: A sub-editor should develop calm temperament to work under pressure of dead-lines.
- 10) Patience: Patience is necessary for a sub editor as he works long under trying conditions. He has to put up with many annoying situations everyday vis-à-vis reporters, proof readers and printers.
- 11) Imagination: This creativity faculty is very useful to a sub editor as he can add sparkle to reader's copy and make it lively.
- 12) Ingenuity: It helps him bringing out attractive page make-ups and in giving an artistic look to the newspaper. He has to be a creative artist.
- 13) Diligence: A sub-editor's job requires painstaking exertion of intense care and effort. He has to make fine distinctions while editing a copy. He should aim at perfection.
- 14) Abundant self-confidence: A sub-editor must feel that every change he makes in copy improves it. He must be ready to correct bad copy whoever may be its author. If a sub-editor is unwilling to change copy for fear of committing an error, he will thrash around in a sea of indecision forever.

15) Maturity: Maturity prevents cockishness. It leads a sub-editor to use his blue pencil and make changes only when necessary, not for the sake of not to mess a good story.

UNIT 2

A Short history of Indian Journalism

James Augustus Hicky has been rightly called the father of Journalism in India. He started the first newspaper in India, the Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General On 29 January 1780. It contained news from English newspapers, letters from readers and gossips meant for the enjoyment of Europeans in Calcutta. Hicky become unpopular when he attacked the Governor General of India, Warren Hastings, and other prominent administrators. Hastings filed cases against him. Hastings was found guilty and imprisoned. Hicky's paper was published even when he was in jail. In 1782, the press was seized and Hicky was banished to England. The Bengal gazette survived for only two years but it was sensation in Calcutta.

Soon many newspapers followed the example set by Hicky. They wrote against the establishment and the misdeeds of the East India Company the Bombay Herald and Madras Courier established in 1791 fought for the freedom of the press.

The credit of starting the Indian language newspaper, goes to Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He introduced cultural renaissance and reformation in the country. He also emphasized the role and freedom of the Press. His powerful editorial irritated the Government. This led to the enactment of John Adams Vernacular Press Act of 1823. This Act imposed restrictions on the freedom of the language newspaper. In spite of the Government's hostile attitude Indian newspapers grew in number. James Buckingham, the editor of Culcutta Chronicle was deported to London. The Bengali founded by Surenderanath Bannerjee helped propagate the message of liberty. Through News India and Vande Mataram public opinion was mobilized for the freedom movement by Bapin Chandra Pal. These touch-bearers of Indian nationalism were supported by Aurobindo, Lajpat Rai and Tilak – the Lion of Maharashtra. Maulana Abdul kalam Azad stirred the spirit of patriotism among the Urdu readers through Al-Hilal.

Started in 1890, the Malayala Manorama and kerala fought against political oppressions as well as the social evils. Kesava Menon of Mathrubhumi conveyed effectively Gandhi's message of the freedom movement. The Andra Patrika (1908) supplied news to the Telegu-speaking nationalists. Political issues were handled remarkably by C.R.Srinivasan in Swedeshimitran – the Tamil version of The Hindu. A selfless mission of patriotism was carried out in Amirt Bazar Patrika by the Ghosh Brothers who were put to numerous hardships.

Mahatma Gandhi dominated the Indian political scene for several years. Through Navajeevan. Youngh India and Harijan he revolutionized Indian politics. Motilal Nehru

wrote in the Independent and the National Herald. They were supported by Dr. Annie Besant who championed the cause of Home Rule in the New India.

The Indian Press was brave and administration. The alien rulers did their utmost to suppress the voice of the Press by imposing restrictions, fining and jailing journalists, but the fight continued relentlessly. The Indian Press awakened the people by putting political, social and economic realities before them. It stirred their patriotic feelings, made them fight a relentless battle and achieve freedom from the British regime. Thus the Indian's Press played a very significant role in India's Freedom Movement.

The Press in a Post-Independent India

The Press has advanced tremendously in Indian during the last 50 years of Independence. Language newspapers and journals have come out in large numbers, and have reached every nook and corner of the country. Journalism is becoming prospective professions, so much so that Journalism is offered as a job-oriented course at various levels in many Indian Universities now.

News and News value

What is news?

What is news? This is an age-old question without a clear-cut answer. According to a popular belief, the term "NEWS" has coined as an acronym of North, East, West and South, and it connotes information coming from all the directions. There is a famous saying : When dog bites man, it is no news; when man bites dog, it is. This, of course, gives an idea of news. Some definitions of News.

1. News is anything you have come to know just now.
2. News is a report of any event, idea or opinion which affects a large number of people.
3. News is a compilation of facts and happenings which will be interesting to readers.

Factors Determining News Value

1. Novelty: Anything that has novelty attracts attention. A blind man riding a motor cycle or a month-old child swimming in water has great news value.

2. Timeliness: Like bun and cakes from the hot oven, news should be fresh, new and hot. Stale news, like stale bread, is only fit for the dust-bin. 'As news ages, it loses potency'. So' in a highly competitive world of journalism today, every medium tries to be the first to give the latest news.

3. Proximity: Something that happens close to home is of utmost interest. Local news arouses the greatest interest. News assumes value through emotional and

geographical closeness. A train accident in Tamil Nadu claims greater attention than a volcano eruption in Java. When the Prime minister visits Chennai, it is of greater interest to people in Chennai and Tamil Nadu than in Bombay or Delhi.

4. Spot News: It is news gathered on the spot – live, immediate and fresh. A reporter may reach the spot of an accident or murder within minutes of its occurrence and flash full news immediately. People affected a calamity like a flood, house-collapse, explosion, etc. are interviewed on the spot. Spot news makes an effective impression on the readers as the reporter writes from direct experience at the scene of occurrence.

5. Eminence & Prominence: News about famous leaders or celebrities interest readers. Mother Teresa's missionary zeal, Sonia Gandhi's rise in politics, Amirya Sen's winning the novel prize, Diana's life and death or Clinton's relationship with Monica , gets top priority.

6. Size: It is the odd size that always attracts attention. A small rare fish caught in a remote part of the world or the fossils of a dinosaur draw immediate attention. Usually major events come as news. But sometimes even minor things draw attention. The Prime Minister having tea with an ordinary villager can captivate people as much as the PM addressing a mammoth public meeting in a city.

7. Change: Change is the law of life. Every moment things are changing. They affect the people for good or bad. A new tax or a law banning lotteries causes some changes in people's life. It becomes important news. Any scientific development – putting a satellite in orbit, exploding atom bombs in Bokaren or striking oil in Cauvery river-bed – causes significant changes in life and becomes top news.

8. Conflict: Social, political or religious conflicts carry a lot of news value. All wars and threats leading to wars have proven record of news worthiness.

9. Curiosity: People are always curious and desirous of sensational news. Sandalwood brigand Veerappan kidnapping or murdering police officers makes immediate appeal as sensational news.

10. Accuracy: This is the most important quality of news. Accuracy in news-reporting increases the value of any news. People value the authenticity of a news item in newspapers like The Hindu or The Times of India because these newspapers are known for their veracity.

11. Information: News value is proportional to the information it gives. Information about the weather, the share market, the bullion market, ect. carries great value of news to concerned people.

12. Human interest: Human interest stories, all sorts of accidents and calamities touch the readers' emotion and appeal to their sympathy. They give pep to a newspaper.

13. Entertainment: Along with serious reading, people need entertainment and pleasure. Light articles, write-ups, cartoons, crosswords, film news, anecdotes, etc. offer relief from the daily anxieties of the life and have the greatest attraction nowadays. They add colour and variety to a newspaper.

News is the life-blood of newspapers. The success of any newspaper of any newspaper depends upon its reporters' fetching out news from all possible sources and presenting various kinds of news in such a way as to captivate reader with different tastes for news.

MAGAZINES AND THE GENRES

Journalism has two wings: (1) Newspaper, (2) Magazines / Periodicals / Journals.

Magazines, periodicals and journals constitute a species as different from newspapers. Unlike newspapers which appear daily, they are published, at regular intervals – once a week, foot night, month or year. They can be classified in various ways.

1. Magazines:

(a) Magazine supplements in newspapers

(b) Full-fledge magazines:

(1) General Magazines (Variegated);

(2) Special Magazines devoted to particular subjects – sports, cinema, health, children, women, etc.

Periodicals / Journals dealing with:

(a) Literature

(b) Arts

(c) Science

(d) Technology and Industry

(e) Business

(f) Politics

(g) Religion

(h) Health

I. Magazines

Newspapers have mass circulation but magazines have mass attraction. Magazines are flooding the market nowadays. One can find a colourful display

of magazines of all sorts at bookstalls at railway stations and at petty shops in bus-stands and bazaars. They dazzle with glossy covers, often featuring sexy pictures and sell out like hot cakes. Of course, magazines exploit the sex appeal, but the point is that magazines come out more attractively than newspapers in many respects.

(a) Newspaper Magazines

Every newspaper issues one or more magazine supplements on specific days of the week. The following are just a few examples

The New Indian Express: “Sunday Express Magazine”, “Science Express” & “Youth Express”.

The Hindu: “Sunday magazine” & “Friday Review”.

Dinamalar: “Vara Malar”(Weekly magazine)

“SiruvarMalar”(Children’s magazine)

“Thirai Malar”(Cinema magazine)

“TV Malar”(TV magazine”

Newspapers magazines especially in The Hindu and The Indian Express are broad-based and variegated in their contents. They contain all sorts of features, catering to the requirements of different section of society. They deal with serious as well as light topics.

(b) Full-fledged magazines:

- i. General magazines: They are meant for all sections of society. They carry a variety of features pertaining to different aspects of life and human endeavours.
- ii. Special magazines: They specialise in individual subjects such as sports, cinema, children, women, etc.

These magazines are published in the form of books or booklets.

II. Periodicals/journals

Of course the periodicals appeal to a specialised market, but they are interesting because they are topical. Among the periodicals in Britain are three political weeklies (the New Statesman, the Spectator and the Tribune), a politico-economic journal (New Society) and one devoted to popular science (the New Scientist), and the humorous weekly Punch.

Technical Journals

There are numerous technical journals dealing with various subjects from poultry to computers.

Technical journals are extremely important to the people in the concerned fields as they provide vital information on the latest trends in the technical knowhow.

House Journals:

Many companies, industries, banks, public sector understandings, educational institutions and other organizations publish their own house journals for internal circulation, or for external circulation as well.

House journals make a valuable contribution to the welfare of any company or organization. They reflect the company's image to the public and promote healthy public relations.

UNIT 3

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mahatma Gandhi says, “The restoration of free speech, free association and free press is almost the whole swaraj”.

Franklin D Roosevelt says, “ Freedom of conscience, of education, of speech, and of assembly are among the very fundamentals of democracy, and all of them would be forfeit should freedom of the Press be ever successfully challenged”.

Freedom of expression is the basis of political liberty. There is no freedom in a country if people can't convey thoughts and ideas to one another. Freedom of expression gives rise to an intelligent and balanced public opinion. A democratic government is run by people's representatives who enter State Assemblies or Parliament after hectic election propaganda. If it is to be for the people, by the people and of the people, the basic requirement is a free Press. A free Press is one which serves the people untrammelled by external influence or uncontrolled by the long arm of the Government.

Struggle for Press Freedom

History shows that there was a long struggle for Press freedom in many countries. Printing was introduced in England in the 15th century but publishing news was possible long after because of a law that could be printed without a licence. That law was used to suppress publication of any news that might discredit the Government. This black law was repealed only in 1695 and the first daily newspaper appeared in 1702. Then there arose other impediments in the form of libel laws and taxes. Editors who criticized the powers – that – be were jailed under one pretext or another.

In America Benjam Harris brought forth the first newspaper called Public Ocurrances in 1690. The British Government agent suppressed this four – page newspaper after its very first issue for a mild criticism of the Government. However, another American paper New York Weekly journal started in 1773, established itself and passed into history for a successful assertion of the freedom of the Press and saying something critical against the Governor of New York, the then representative of the British King. Andrew Hamilton, a Philadelphia lawyer, successfully defended him against the charges of ‘ seditious libel’ and got him acquitted. He proved that the criticism against the governor of New York was based on facts and as such there was no question f sedition or libel. The historic judgement was hailed as

the “ Morning Star of Liberty” which revolutionized America and the ‘ Liberty of the Press’ became a historic slogan.

In India under the British rule, things were much more bleak and many newspapers suffered a lot for voicing support to the freedom struggle. When India became a Republic, the constitution guaranteed freedom of expression but it carried a conditional rider that the state can make laws for its curtailment for reasons of security. According to the constitution, the freedom of the Press is more or less the freedom of the individual citizen. The Press Act piloted by the then Home Minister Rajaji and passed by our own Parliament was condemned as a Black Act. It had all the objectionable features of the by – gone regime. Fortunately, however, it was left to lapse after a short duration. When Emergency was clamped by Indira Gandhi during 1975 -77 the Press was gagged and all newspapers were subjected to censorship. In protest, leading national newspapers left their editorial columns blank or black. Of course, the Press regained its lost freedom after the lifting of the Emergency. When compared to the colonial times, the Indian Press now enjoys a lot of freedom. The Pressmen today take a ringside seat in an honoured Press gallery of our Parliament and State Legislatures and report the proceedings and give vivid accounts of electrifying moments there.

Accountability vis – a- vis Press Freedom

For all practical purposes the Press enjoys uninhibited freedom. But it does not mean that the Press can have unlimited freedom.

Like all other freedom, freedom of the Press should also not be used as a licence. It should not be misused to create a situation of the law of the jungle. For example, it cannot be left scot-free to incite communal riots in the country. It cannot have the freedom to question the integrity of the Judges or to defame them. It cannot publish views detrimental to the interests of the nation.

It is a little distressing to note that the recent trends seem to be towards abuse of freedom. Some newspapers, especially political papers, regional language papers and magazines indulge in perversion of facts, scandal – mongering, yellow journalism and communalism. Journalists should never forget that their fundamental aims are upholding truth, maintaining impartiality, and service to the public cause. Freedom does not give them the licence to outstep the norms of decency and decorum, to override standard rules and regulations. The press should behave itself. Self – regulation is the best guarantee of Press freedom and the Press can violate the traditional code of ethics only at its own peril.

Rightly has the Commission on Freedom of the Press said in its report : “ The Press must free for making its contribution to the maintenance and development of free society. This implies that the Press must also be accountable. It must be accountable to society for meeting the public needs and maintain the rights of citizens. It must know that its faults and errors have ceased to be private vagaries and have become public dangers ... Freedom of the Press can continue only as an accountable freedom. Its moral right will be conditioned by its acceptance of this accountability. Its legal right will stand unaltered as its moral duty is performed”.

In conclusion, the Press, as the Fourth Estate, has all sorts of privileges. However they carry with them corresponding responsibilities, too.

Press Codes and Ethics

It is agreed by all that the Press is an essential organ of a democratic country, an important vehicle of mass communication and a vital instrument in the creation of healthy public opinion. As such it is necessary that journalistic should regard their profession as a trust to serve public interest. They should follow a code of ethics to avoid abuse of Press freedom and discharge their duties in the best way possible.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors has adopted a set of ‘ Ethical Rules’ or Canons of Journalism, which can be observed universally by journalists. The responsibility of the Press is clearly described therein : “ The right of a newspaper to attract and hold readers is restricted by nothing but considerations of public welfare. The share of public attention gained by a newspaper serves to determine its sense of responsibility, which it shares with every member of staff. The journalist who uses this power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy purpose is not faithful to a high trust”. It is elaborated as follows:

1. Promotion of any private interest contrary to the general welfare, for whatever reasons, is not compatible with honest criticism. News communications from private sources should not be published without public notice of their source or substantiation of their claims to value as news both in form and in substance.
2. Partisanship in editorial comment which knowingly departs from the truth does violence to the best spirit of journalism in the news columns it is subversive of a fundamental principal of the profession

In 1966, the Press Council of India evolved certain guidelines for the conduct of India evolved certain guidelines for the conduct of newspapers and periodicals. According to these guidelines, the Press should avoid:

1. Exaggeration or distortion of facts or incidents to achieve sensationalism;
2. Giving currency to unverified rumours, suspicions or inferences;
3. Employment of intemperate and unrestrained language in the presentation of news or views even as a piece of literary flavour or for the purposes of rhetoric or emphasis.
4. Scurrilous and untrue attacks on individuals or communities,
5. Falsely giving a communal colour to casual incidents or individual hatred;
6. Highlighting matters likely to produce communal hatred;
7. Encouraging or condoning violence for redress of grievances, genuine or otherwise;
8. Publishing alarming news in such a way as to cause undue panic among people;
9. Provocative comments or views which may embitter relations between regional, linguistic or religious groups;
10. Making disrespectful, derogatory or insulting remarks on different religions or faiths or their founders.

Sincerity, truthfulness and accuracy are the fundamental virtues of journalism. In all writings news reports, special articles or features, etc. – the general guidelines based on newspaper ethics in the broadest sense have to be scrupulously followed. News reporters should be free from distorted opinion or bias of any kind.

A newspaper should be run as a newspaper and not a viewpaper. There is nothing wrong in cutting news short and making it spicy, or in making the contents sufficiently variegated to attract the interest of every section of the people. But politics that is perverted or news that is distorted with a crooked slant, deprives a newspaper of its elementary title and right to the free dissemination of news and information. A story that is elaborated with dubious padding or false coating is a rape of the liberty of the Press. Subtle attempts at ‘suppression and suggestion falsi’ still constitute the bane of the Press all over the world and India is no exception. The way the mushrooming party papers have a penchant for hitting below the belt is nauseating.

The Press should be governed by fair play. Headlines should not be deceptive or misleading; they should be appropriate to the contents of the articles. A newspaper should not publish unofficial charges affecting the reputation or moral character without giving an opportunity to the accused to be heard. A newspaper should not infringe on the rights of private feelings.

A news paper is duty bound to make prompt and complete correction if its own serious mistakes of fact or opinion, whatever their origin.

Above all, it is the moral duty of a newspaper or magazine to strive for correction of tastes, not corruption of human minds. It should not pander to vile, instincts and mad passions by deliberately depicting crime and vice, sex and violence, communal conflicts and religious feuds.

It is unfortunate that newspapers in general and magazines in particular, carry now an overdose of sex and crime or the new wave permissiveness. Yellow journalism should be shunned. Sex debauchery and blood – curling crime, when pictured as something bordering on the heroic, are bound to debase man and society. Such exploitation carries with it its own seeds of destruction. Pandering to man’s sexual cravings for the sake of pecuniary profits is exploitation of the basest kind, and any newspaper or magazine indulging in this abominable game is not worth its name.

Censorship and Control in India & Government, Media and Social Responsibility

Newspapers are the world’s mirrors. They inform the governments how they look in the public eye. Speaking of democracy, the French political scholar, Joseph Barthelemy, points out that it ‘carries with it the idea or principle of publicity for all the acts, deliberations, decisions and procedures performed in the name of the state’. The very foundations of a democracy is the people’s acquaintance with all the policies and activities of a government. In the absence of facts in public life, democracy falls a victim to illusion and corruption. The Press enlightens people with its free views. The enlightenment helps to preserve democratic and humanitarian governments.

When governments or newspapers suppress news, distort it and fill it with propaganda, the result is ignorance, class – hatred, ill – will and dictatorship. The fall of Indira Gandhi’s government, after the declaration of emergency in India was solely the result of the imposition of Press censorship and the dictatorial behaviour of the Government in power. Only in a democracy, the Press can perform its true role as a guardian of public interest, a watch – dog, and a source of all kinds of information. In most democracies, the Press is a private enterprise and enjoys immense freedom of expression, so much so that it can make or break governments.

When Congress governments enjoyed a huge majority in Parliament, they did not pay much heed to the views of the Press nor were they responsive to constructive criticism of the Press. They have paid a heavy price for their neglect of the Press by being voted out of power.

We can see for ourselves how the media have influenced the citizens to vote intelligently and participate in all kinds of social and political activities.

Rightly did Wendell Phillips say, ‘ We live under a government of men and morning newspapers’. The Press in a democracy must never forget that it is the most powerful link between the government and the people, and that it will snap this vital link if it resorts to what is described as scurrilous writing and ‘ Yellow Journalism’ including indecent material and pornography. Democracy is a great boon to man, and so is a free press. Both must cherish their virtues and reinforce each other constantly.

Misuse of power, suppression of people’s rights, stifling of people’s voices and other acts of highhandedness, are common in autocratic and dictatorial regimes, in which any touch of democracy is absent. So, the Press can play its proper role as the guardian of the people’s rights and privileges, an instructor, and an unfailing counselor only in democracies. In a democracy, the Press enjoys the status of the fourth Estate next only to the Legislative, the Judiciary and the Executive wings of the government. Rightly had the American President Thomas Jefferson remarked : “ Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without the government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter”.

(B) The Press as a Powerful Social Force

The Press should not function merely as an adversary or ally of the government in power. It should act more as a catalytic agent to accelerate the process of socio – economic change and development. As the voice of the public, its chief aim is to be a watch – dog to promote public welfare and interests.

A clause of the First Press Commission of India stipulates that ‘the Press should help secure and protect order in which justice (social, economic and political) would prevail’. Unfortunately, in India today, the Press gives undue importance to political processes and political affairs. Political events, bickering and squabbles are given wide coverage. Even a silly rumour relating to the personal life of an MLA or MP, hits the headline. It is no exaggeration to say that the Press is obsessed with politics.

The urgent need of the Press is creative, investigative and development reporting on socio-economic problems. Themes like unemployment, malnutrition, cases of injustice, development schemes, consumerism, atrocities of the bureaucracy, and the like, certainly claim great importance and need to be highlighted. The Press should exist for the benefit of society, not politicians alone. The press has a long way to go in striving for socio – economic justice.

Whatever may be said of the Press and its political leanings, it must be conceded that most newspapers and periodicals in particular, like 'India Today', 'The Week', and several regional periodicals like 'Junior Vikatan', 'Tuqlaq' and 'Nakeeran' do play a significant role in exposing crimes, scams and scandals that rock the nation. But for the alert Press, the exposure of the blinding incidents at Bhagalpur, the atrocities of the authorities in Thihar jail, the Bofors pay-offs, the Harshad Mehta securities scam, police atrocities, corruption at all levels, red – tapism, mark scandals in Government and University examinations, the under – world of the 'dadas', etc., would never have come to light.

The Indian Press has risen to greater heights in protecting the interests of the common man. Besides exposing social ills, the Press takes pains to promote welfare schemes. It makes all – out efforts to ensure that people's basic needs and amenities that may offer information, comfort and solace, are secured.

The setting up of mechanisms of public service, outside the news columns, has greatly enhanced the value of the Press in society. The Income Tax service bureau is of immense help to tax – payers. The latest trends in the stock markets are of great value to bulls, bears and speculators. The Press plays a vital role in the process of marketing. It carries advertising messages which influence consumers, and to a considerable extent informs them of marketing trends. But at the same time it also promotes healthy consumerism by featuring articles on consumer awareness and consumer protection.

Fund- raising campaigns for all kinds of relief work are undertaken by the Press with tremendous public response at the State and Central levels. Crusades, movements and special investigations by journalists help bring about reforms, and curb evil practices, thus promoting constructive social activities.

Thus the Press is a powerful social force, it can break or build society.

UNIT - IV

Media Laws

The Press is subject to certain government laws, which aim at preventing abuse of the freedom of expression by the print media. Journalists should be familiar with the laws which affect them in their day-to-day work. The most important among them are the law of libel and defamation, contempt of court and legislatures, copyright etc.

(a) Libel / Defamation:

Of course it is not easy to define what is defamatory or libelous. In general, it is a writing tending to injure and degrade the character of a person who is the object of it. Libel is a defamatory statement published in the Press or otherwise, while slander is oral defamation. Libel is the publication of a false or defamatory statement expressed in writing or printing, or by signs, pictures or tangible form, published without lawful justification or excuse concerning a person and causing injury to his reputation.

Libellous statements fall into the following categories:

1. Exciting hatred, contempt, scorn or ridicule
2. To be shunned or avoided by society
3. Affecting profession, calling or office
4. Affecting trade or business.

It is defamatory to make pejorative attributes to a person without rhyme or reason. For instance, calling a person a liar, a villain, a jackal or pig, or making dishonourable comparisons between persons, is defamatory. Making false allegations to degrade a person wrongly, or indulging in character-assassination, is libellous.

To ward off defamatory cases against them, journalists should observe the following guidelines:

1. Journalists should be aware of citizens' rights.
2. Journalists should cling to truth as their religion. However, it does not mean that they can publish everything because it is true, regardless of decency and decorum.
3. A newspaper can come unscathed out of a defamation action if it can prove the printed matter to be true and done in good faith.
4. A newspaper should ascertain the facts before publication to avoid landing in an embarrassing situation of having to tender an unconditional apology and the like. For example, if a newspaper reports the death of a VIP or the arrest of a celebrity, which turns to be false, or gives wrong information about election results in haste, it exposes itself to the risk of legal action and lose the reader's faith in its regard for veracity.

5. Any comment by a newspaper in its editorial columns must be based on facts. Of course criticism is permissible, but it must be fair. No adverse remark will be considered fair by a court of law unless it is based on real facts free from doubt. Comments and views expressed may be controversial but must be capable of being honest criticism.
6. In reporting public meetings, the report must be accurate, not perverted or twisted, and the subject, matter of publication must be for public benefit.
7. In judicial proceedings, the law envisages that any publication should be without malice and the report should be an accurate and fair account of open court proceedings only.
8. It is unlawful to publish any indecent matter or any indecent surgical details calculated to injure public morals. The law forbids publication of any details other than the names, statements of charges, defence and countercharges, and judgement of the court in matrimonial cases.

(b) Contempt of Court

It is rather difficult to define the term 'contempt of court'. Any action or writing that tends to scandalize or lower the authority of any process of law or administration of justice, constitutes contempt of court.

Contempt of court arises mostly in criminal proceedings before courts. In the case of a criminal offence it is risky to publish anything more than what actually transpires in court. Any history about the alleged activities of the accused should be scrupulously avoided unless they are openly mentioned in court.

Contempt of Court is of two kinds:

- (i) Contempt in the face of the court (Direct contempt)
- (ii) Contempt out of court (Indirect contempt)

Direct Contempt:

It is an open disrespect of court orders or regulations. If a reporter returns to the court room openly or secretly after exclusion from it, if a reporter photographs an accused person in court against the court's wishes, he commits direct contempt of court. Publication of ' in camera' proceedings – secret hearing in some cases – is contempt of court.

Indirect Contempt: It may be divided into:

- (a) False and grossly inaccurate report of court proceedings;
- (b) Publications which may have a reasonable tendency to interfere with the orderly administration of justice

(c) Publications that scandalize the court, judges, counsel, parties or witnesses

When a matter is 'sub judice', that is pending in court, no opinion or criticism by newspapers is permissible. Of course, after the disposal of a case, newspapers have the privilege of fair comment reasonable criticism based on facts. They may review the facts of the law and express their opinion even if that opinion may be contrary to the decision of the incompetency, corruption, partiality, judicial dishonesty, political bias, improper motives or other considerations amount to contempt of court.

According to the Contempt of Court Act, contempt of court is punishable with imprisonment or fine or both. The accused may be discharged or the punishment remitted on tendering an apology to the satisfaction of the court.

Hence, a journalist should be careful enough not to attract contempt proceedings.

(C) Contempt of Parliament and State Legislatures

Journalists have to be careful while reporting the proceedings of Parliament or State Legislatures. Their writings should not amount to breach of privilege or contempt of the House. Writings which tend to destroy the image of the House and its members in the performance of their functions and duties by diminishing the respect due to them and by bringing them into odium, contempt and ridicule, would amount to a breach of privilege and contempt of the House. Journalists should avoid personal attacks on the members; their language should not be vulgar or abusive, and their comments on parliamentary proceedings should not be unfair or unjustifiable.

However, to prevent harassment of the Press, the Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act 1956, popularly known as Feroz Gandhi Act., provides that no person would be liable to any proceedings of either House of Parliament. The Act was repealed during the emergency but was re-enacted in 1978, leaving the State legislatures free to enact their own legislation in this respect.

(d) The Official Secrets Act, 1923

It deals with two kinds of offences: (i) spying (ii) wrongful communication, etc, of secret information.

Newspapermen must be careful not to get caught by Section 3 of this Act: It is an offence if any person for any purpose prejudicial to the safety or interest of the State (a) approaches, inspects, passes over or wanders in the vicinity of or enters, any prohibited area; or (b) makes any sketch, plan, model or note, which is calculated to be or might be or is intended to be directly or indirectly, useful to an enemy; or (c) obtains, collects, records or publishes or communicates to any other person any sketch, plan, model, article or note or other document

or information which is calculated to be or might be or is intended to be directly or indirectly useful to an enemy. In simple language it means that nobody should mess around military and other establishments which are out of bounds, without permission.

(e) Copyright

Copyright is a right of possession accruing to a person in respect of a work produced by him as a result of exercise of skill, judgement and labour. Under the Copyright Act, protection is offered to literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, archaeological or any work relating to craftsmanship. In such cases, the author has exclusive right of publication, production, reproduction, translation etc.

Newspapers, periodicals and magazines are subject to the copyright law. However, a fair dealing with literary, musical, artistic work for the purpose of criticism, review, reporting current events in a newspaper or magazine, does not constitute an infringement of copyright.

Of course newspapers rarely violate the copyright law. Copyright articles and stories are seldom lifted by any newspaper or magazine from another, because they become stale valueless by the time they are re – published. Of course, any published matter can be used under necessity, but it should be duly acknowledged. It is a happy thing to note that the problem of infringement of the copyright law has not assumed any serious dimensions in the journalistic field.

(f) Press and Registration of Books Act

The Press and Registration of Books Act regulates printing presses and the publication of newspapers, magazines, books, etc. It places a duty on the publishers of any newspaper to furnish annual statements to the Registrar of Newspapers along with returns and reports. One copy of every newspaper is required to be sent to the Press Registrar of India, with Headquarters in Delhi and regional offices in specified places.



News Agencies

The news agencies are a boon to all newspapers, especially small newspapers which cannot afford to maintain correspondents or reporters on a large scale. These newspapers can get all sorts of information and news by subscribing to these special news agencies. The big newspapers also can profitably avail of the services of the News Agencies, to supplement the news collected by their own team. The News Agencies running the internal news service have contractual links with Foreign News Agencies and easily get access to global news.

Geneology of News Agencies

Paul Julius Reuter was the pioneer in the field of News Agency. What he started in 1851 in London as a single – man reporting service with one office – boy as his assistant later took the pride of place as ‘ Reuters’ (News Agency) in the world’s greatest Common wealth which includes India.

The history of news agencies in India dates back to just a few decades before Independence, Reuter owned and operated an ‘Associated Press of India’ (API). After independence, API was transferred to Indian ownership and named the ‘ Press Trust of India (PTI). The PTI had a chequered career. For years it remained virtually a monopoly. It faced no worthwhile competition from the ‘ United Press of India’ (UPI) , started by Mr. Sen Gupta, a Bengali patriot, who promoted it as an indigenous organization as an outlet for nationalistic activities. UPI was financially weak and was wound up in 1958. The ‘United News of India’ (UNI) was started in 1961 largely as a result of newspapers’ dissatisfaction with the performance of monopolistic PTI.

‘The Hindustan Samacher’ was India’s first multilingual news agency, set up in 1948. It supplied news to more than 135 subscribers in 10 Indian languages before its merger with ‘ Samachar’ during the Emergency (1976). Samachar Bharathi, the second language news agency, started functioning in 1967. It fed news to 50 language papers, especially the small and medium papers, All India Radio and State Information agencies.

The four news agencies were merged by the Indira Gandhi Government during the Emergency and a news agency ‘ Samachar’ was formed on 1 February 1976. When the Janatha Government came to power in 1977, it was split up and ‘ status quo ante’ was restored to end the monopoly in mass media which are meant to inform and educate the people, and to restore a healthy competition in dissemination of information in the larger interests of the body politics. Surely it was a step in the right direction in a free and vast country like India.

There are quite a few news agencies in India today but PTI and UNI are the most prominent among them. The news agencies have sophisticated communication links connecting hundreds of cities and towns in India, from where their reporters gather all sorts of news and transmit to the Head office. After due processing, news is perennially supplied to subscribing newspapers through teleprinter/ fax/ computer network.

The Indian News Agencies have link – ups with Foreign news Agencies from which they receive a regular supply of all foreign news for distribution to their internal subscribers.

Some Important Foreign News Agencies:

1. Associated Press of America - API (France)

2. Reuter (Britain)
3. Agency France Press - AFP (France)
4. TASS - (Soviet Union)
5. United Press International - UPI (United States)
6. Kyodo News Service (Japan)
7. British Broadcasting Corporation - BBC (England)
8. Deutsche Press Agentur - DPA (Germany)
9. New China News Agency - NCNA
10. Arab News Agency - ANA (Egypt)
11. Eraq News Agency - INA (Baghdad)
12. Pakistan Press International - PPI
13. Polish Agency Press - PAP (Poland)

Speed, accuracy and brevity must be the cardinal virtues of News Agencies, as they are of news and newspapers.

News Agencies must act with great responsibility as caterers of news to almost all newspapers. They must serve with business acumen and earn the goodwill of the newspapers – their direct customers – and the reading public – their indirect customers.

Thanks to ultra modern modes of transmission of news, News Agencies now specialize in ‘bulk supply’ of news from all over the world. In a way this tends to lighten the burden of correspondents as news collectors and reporters, and turn them into processors, interpreters elucidators and commentators of news received through news agencies, for the reading public.

Government, media and Social Responsibility

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UNIT 5

FEATURE WRITING

Feature Writing is an important aspect of journalism. A newspaper cannot confine itself to news reporting alone. It has to depend on many other components. It is rightly said that a newspaper survives by news reporting and thrives by feature writing. Features have become essential components of every newspaper. They occupy a major place in every Journal.

The term 'feature' is most common among newsmen but one does not know what it exactly means. Mr. Brain Nicholas in his book Features with 'air describes features as the 'soul' of newspapers. There is no consensus among journalists about its scope, type and other related matters.

Some definitions of Feature.

(1) The news story stops after it has presented facts or ideas. The feature story goes further. It explores the background, the birth and growth of the idea or event. provides a glance at future too. It conveys to the reader what you, the writer or some one else, think about the idea or event. It has greater appeal to the reader's imagination.

(2) Feature is a detailed presentation of some interesting subject in a popular form. It deals with the day's news. a timely or seasonal subject or any topic that appeals to a number of readers. Its purpose is to entertain, inform or to give practical guidance, i.e. to show to readers as to how to do something.

(3) It is a piece of writing which explains amplifies and interprets issues with study, research and interview.

These definitions give some idea of the 'feature'. A feature is an article giving background information on certain events or personalities in the news. It is a non-news article in a newspaper on some prominent subject, contributed by a named author Nowadays feature has become very popular in the newspapers and magazines.

A feature may be written by a prominent journalist or general author or some specialist. Every newspaper has some special correspondents for subjects like economics, politics, science, 'etc. A feature may be written on a financial matter by an economics correspondent, on a political problem by a political correspondent, on a medical topic by a medical specialist, on a subject of art by an art critic on a social evil by a freelance writer. Sometimes important persons in different spheres of life an industrialist, a member of parliament, a sportsman, etc may write features on any topic in their specialised fields. '

A feature writer has considerably more time at his disposal than a news reporter. He can research more facts at a leisurely pace. Features may be planned in advance in such a way that they are published at the time of some important event; for example inauguration of a conference, exhibition, project, etc.. celebration of the anniversary of famous leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Kamaraj, Annadurai. MGR. etc. as well as significant events like Independence Day, Republic Day, etc. But sometimes features may have to be written at short notice. For instance, when a significant event takes place, a feature has to be written quickly. When an earthquake strikes, an epidemic breaks out or a major calamity affects a lot of people, features are written immediately, dealing with various aspects of the subject on hand.

Features are written after the death of an important personality, national leader or celebrity. When an unknown person seizes power after a military coup d'etat, or an insignificant person suddenly shoots to prominence in some sphere of human activity, features are published providing all available information about that person and highlighting his achievement. In such a type of feature an attempt is made to anticipate all the questions likely to arise in the minds of the readers, and to provide the necessary information tactfully.

Feature articles of human interest or human value are immensely popular. They can be written on ever-green subjects like health, family planning, sex, women's liberation, fashions, social evils, etc. Nowadays many newspapers and magazines are full of features on sexual matters. Features regarding the private lives of past and present important personalities, men in power and position, film stars, etc. are immensely popular. Feature articles often appear on divorce and its repercussions, problems of working women, dowry harassment, child labour, bonded labour.etc.

Features are also written on matters of topic interest and current problems, such as deteriorating law and order situation, increase in eve-teasing incident daylight robberies, gold chain snatching, juvenile delinquency, etc. Medico Navarasu murder, college Sarika's death due to eve-teasing, death of under trials, rape of women in police custody, etc. have been featured by many newspapers and magazines with aplomb in recent times.

Features based on interviews are gaining ground now.

Generally freelance writers have a field day with feature writing. But many regular reporters are good feature writers. A good feature writer is a journalist who can do much more than reporting the plain facts; he must be able to create an atmosphere of lively descriptive writing.

Some newspapers devote some space to special feature called column writing. In a newspaper the columnist is something of a privileged person can venture into fields that are forbidden territory to reporters. Some famous editors have been celebrate columnists. Frank Moraes was noted for his column the *Sunday Times of India*, M.V. Kamath for gossip column in the *Free Press Bulletin* and Chalapathi Rao for his column 'Off the Record' under the pseudonym Magnus.

Generally features are written in a lighter vein some of the features are social or political satires ant have a hidden sarcasm. Such light articles are much liked by the readers, as they provide some amusement and entertainment. Some feature writers become very popular by writing about very commonplace subjects like domestic problems, problems, of the newly-weds husband and wife problems working women's problems, etc. in a lively, amusing but at the same time informative and instructive manner. No doubt, feature writing enjoys great popularity and occupies a prominent place in all newspapers and magazines.

Variety of Features.

It is said that 'the sky is the limit' for the scope of feature writing. A feature can be written on every possible subject if the writer has imagination and skill. As it is difficult to define a feature, it is also difficult to classify features. Journalists have come out with different classifications based on the technique of writing, purpose, content, etc.

(a) Features on the basis of technique

A feature which adopts some special technique or method is named after it. For example, a feature which is written on the basis of a personal interview is called 'interview feature'.

(b) Features on the basis of purpose

- (i) Expository feature: It explains things or timely topics. '
- (ii) Descriptive feature: It gives verbal pictures of persons, things or places of interest.
- (iii) Narrative feature: It narrates events with plot, setting and characters.

(c) Features on the basis of content

1. News Features:

They are the most common type of features. They are also called 'news follow-ups', or 'news in depth', or 'news behind news'. They are tied to current events, and one gets ideas of such features from the news reports. For example, the news announcement of the visit of a foreign President or -Prime Minister to India may give rise to features on the visiting dignitary. News of a fire accident in a slum may prompt a feature pointing out the miseries of the poor 'slum dwellers and the need for slum clearance.

2. Background Features:

Features which are not directly connected with news but deal with subjects of continuing interest such as smoke pollution, road safety, water scarcity, etc. are known as background features.

3. Anniversary Features:

Features which deal with anniversary celebrations of events like birth, death, marriage, establishment of an institution, etc. are called anniversary features.

Features on religious festivals fall under the category of mythological background features.

4. Personality Features:

They deal with the biography or personality of celebrities. They are about well-known persons and their achievements. The emphasis is on what has made a person great rather than cataloguing his achievements.

5. Serious or Analytical Features:

They deal with a subject in depth and analyse its various aspects.

6. Light or Entertaining Features:

They are meant for amusement or entertainment. Middle appearing in several daily papers are examples of this kind.

7. Human interest Features:

In such features human interest is the primary content. They deal with ordinary persons in extra-ordinary circumstances or extra-ordinary persons in ordinary circumstances. They touch the heart of the reader and appeal to his emotions.

8. Wild-Life Features:

The increasing interest in environment and wild-life has resulted in an increase of features with these subjects in newspapers and magazines. They are usually accompanied by suitable photographs.

9. Photo Features:

They are pictorial features. In a photo feature, a series of photographs, arranged according to a particular pattern, tell the story, in an effective manner. There is very little write-up in such a feature. A photo feature is different from an illustrated feature. An illustrated feature is a feature article that is suitably supplied with illustrative pictures or photographs. But a photo feature deals with a single person or theme. The photo feature may be on Thanaraj Pillai, the Indian Hockey captain at the Asian Games 1998, or on Sachin Tendulkar, the famous Indian cricketer, or on different kinds of butterflies, or on slum dwellers showing their pathetic living conditions.

10. Technical & Scientific Features:

They explain advances in science, technology electronics etc. in simple language so that even a layman can understand various aspects of science and modern technological developments.

11. Hobby Features:

They deal with usual or unusual hobbies. The hobbies of well-known retired people in all walks of life are sources of delightful features.

Differences between News and Feature

Both news and feature spring from the same source. But they differ in approach and treatment. Feature has some characteristics which distinguish it from news and make it a class by itself.

1. Scope: narrow x wide:

News is an objective and factual account of events. The reporter just gives a news story based on the six questions who, what, where, when, why and how. He estimates the relative value of different ingredients of an event and includes the most important of them in his news story. His purpose is to give facts or information of interest to the people.

But a feature goes much beyond a news story. It gives a new dimension to the news. It examines and dissects news and throws new light on different aspects. It explores the background and probes the event. It is not a mere narration of facts. Its purpose is to inform and entertain, and to arouse curiosity, sympathy, humour and other feelings 'among the readers. A feature writer reacts to the people, situations, events and places, and provides a colourful background and explanatory matter for his feature story obviously feature-writing is wider in scope than news writing.

Take for example a train accident. A news item would give the general facts time, place and cause of the accident and the casualties. But a feature writer probes deeper and comes out with a lot of things. He may describe the reaction of survivors and relatives of the wounded and the dead passengers, the human or technical causes of the mishap, and a statistical study of similar railway accidents in the past. His feature is generally interesting and enlightening.

In the case of a kidnapping, a news reporter gives only the bare facts. But a feature writer may give interesting details of why and how it was executed. He can portray the feelings and emotions of the relatives of the kidnapped person. He can bring out the inhuman aspects of kidnapping and make suggestions on putting an end to this pernicious activity.

Thus a feature and a news story differ in their scope.

2. Timeliness x. Remoteness

A news story deals with current events. It is like a vegetable, a perishable commodity. Speed is of great importance in communicating a news item. It has to meet some deadlines. A feature is not subject to such conditions. It can be on a recent or remote event, a current or past topic. An event of the distant past can become an interesting topic for a feature at any later time.

For instance, features appear on eve-teasing even now, long after the college girl Sarika's death.

3. Brevity x Elaboration

Brevity is the soul of news writing. A news story is matter-of-fact. There is not much room for background material or additional particulars. But feature writing enjoys more freedom and flexibility. Unlike a news item, a feature can be written elaborately and can occupy more space than a news story

4. Proximity x Distance

Nearness adds value to a news item. For example, a train accident in Tirunelveli has greater news value to the local people than to people in Chennai or Delhi. But this is not necessarily the case with a feature. A feature writer can deal with anything in a remote place if he can make it interesting to the readers. For instance, a feature on the wedding rituals of some tribals in the African jungles is likely to attract attention in any other part of the globe.

5. Style of writing: simple x ornate

Feature and news vary much in the style of writing. A news story is hurriedly written for urgent publication. So it is written in a simple, easy style. It is usually written in the inverted pyramid format to acquaint the hasty readers with the essentials of a news story within the short time available at their disposal. So it is concise, terse and matter-of-fact. News writing has to be done within the limits of a set format and pattern.

But feature writing is free from such constraints. The feature writer has more freedom. He can be long and descriptive. He can freely react to situations, events and people with emotion and imagination. He can write in a colourful and fiction style, or in a scholarly style, depending on the subject and circumstances. He can communicate with the readers in an effective, interesting and entertaining manner. He can employ a formal or informal style as the situation warrants. He can use a literary, ornamental and colourful style. A feature writer can use a wider vocabulary than a news writer.

6. Title, heading etc.

A reporter does not generally give his news story a title, sub-title or heading. It is the function of the sub-editor at the news desk. But a feature writer has to provide all these appellations in his feature. A news story usually carries only a heading short, ample. But a feature carries a catchy title. It is so formed as to capture everybody's attention and arouse his interest in the feature. Dull, weary, stereotyped titles are avoided in a feature; For example, a title such as 'Population Control' is insipid, but a title like 'Population Explosion' or 'Baby-boom' is certainly enticing. It can be followed by a subtitle '6000 babies a second - Can we prevent mankind's doom?' It will supplement the title and arrest the reader's attention. The title and sub-title depend to some extent on the type of newspapers or journals for which the feature is written. For example, tilting titles for serious topics, or snappy titles for features in sober newspapers or journals, will be out of tune and awkward

7. Structure : set pattern x flexible pattern

A news story often follows the inverted variety in theme and treatment, matter and method, pyramid structure. The 'intro' or lead carries the climax, and other details of the story are given in a logical, not a chronological order of priority or importance. But a feature is free to follow any structural mode. It can start with the beginning or middle Distinction between Feature and Article or end of a story. It can be written in a conventional or unconventional mode. A feature can start with an anecdote, dialogue, and interesting conversation or startling statement but it should be interesting and have a direct bearing on the subject-matter. Some feature writer's plunge straight into the subject and simultaneously introduce the special angle which they have in mind. .

8. Incompleteness x Fullness :

A news story is limited to a single time and place. It is not always complete. A full news story about an event is not possible at one stroke. A news story is followed by subsequent reports. For instance a murder appears as a flash news first and further details are reported as and when they become available. But a feature is generally an integrated whole. It appears in full form or in a few instalments if it is a serialized feature. Anyway a feature is a pre-planned, full- fledged write-up.

9. Commonness x Variety research.

News is more or less common in all papers since its sources are the same. News coverage and treatment may vary, but not extensively. So news does not give any distinctiveness to a newspaper. But features are not stereotyped like news. They can afford variety in theme and treatment, matter and method, subject and style. So newspapers and

journals derive much of their individuality and distinctiveness from the kind of features they publish.

Distinction Between Feature and Article

Many people confuse between a feature and an article in a newspaper or journal. Of course there are many common things between them; yet each has a character and identity of its own.

Both articles and features are non-news form of writing. They often assume the characteristics of each other. It is not easy to put them in water-tight compartments. However, they have some marked differences.

1. Subject matter : broad x specific

An article is generally written on broad subjects, covering many aspects. But in features, the subject matter is rather specific, minute and narrow. Only one or two aspects are dealt with at a time. A feature deals with a single mood. The approach to the subject is general in the article, but specific in the feature.

2. Scholarly x Emotional

An article is an elaborate piece of composition. It is a product of the mind. It is based on study and research. It is scholarly and serious in tone. It is usually well – documented, with facts, figures and a lot of statistics. But a feature is a product of the heart, involving emotions, feelings and reactions of the writer in a lighter vein. In features, facts and figures are not essential.

3.Length

An article can be lengthier than a feature.

4. Information x Entertainment

An article provides a lot of information and education. It is generally devoid of any entertainment of instruction. But a feature has often an element of entertainment and instruction, besides information.

5. Illustrations:

Photographs & other illustrations are essential in features, but not so in articles.

6. Style : formal x colourful

In articles the style of writing is generally formal, scholarly, heavy and sober. But in features style is more informal, more colourful. Dullness is fatal to a feature. Features can dramatize, humanize an event or idea, and provide joy and delight so as to make greater appeal to the readers

7. Projection of opinion: personal x impersonal.

Articles are written by experts in special fields. An expert makes a comprehensive study of a subject second feature may be on his attitude to India's gives his conclusions and views, which carry an element of personal opinion directly.

But in features, personal opinion is projection. indirectly through others.

8. Structure

An article has a conventional beginning, middle and end. It has a rigid structure. But a feature has a flexible structure. It can start abruptly and end abruptly. It can follow any order in presenting the materials, provided it sustains the reader's interest.

9. Mood

A feature is generally 'poetic' while an article is prosaic. A feature is a sort of lyric in prose, 'a momentary mood garnered in words'. But an article deals with several moods 'from grave to the gay and from sublime to ridiculous'. While the feature is like a neat, little, beautiful one – room cottage, the article is like 'a many –roomed mansion with several storeys'.

Let us have a concrete illustration to understand the differences between a news story, a feature and an article. A single event or situation comes handy for a news story, a feature and an article. Suppose there is a sudden announcement of the American President's visit schedule as issued from the White House. In a day or two features may appear in many newspapers and periodicals. None of them is likely to be about the President's visit schedule. One feature may be a personality feature on the President and point out how he rose to the highest position. A second feature may be on his attitude to India's successful atom bomb tests. A third feature may be on the social and cultural engagements of the President's wife.

But an article will be entirely different. It may be written by an expert. He may attempt an in – death study of Indo-American relations in various aspects – political, economic, educational, social and cultural, giving abundant facts and figures.

The Reporter

The news reporter is at the lowest rung in the hierarchy of journalists, but he is the most vital base of the magnificent mansion of journalism. Among journalists he is the most familiar and the most respected person in public. At all important public meetings demonstrations, national or international gatherings and trouble spots, the presence of the news reporter represents the mysterious and invisible power of the press.

A major newspaper has four categories of reporters:

1. **City Reporters:** They cover the city (state/ capital / Headquarters of his newspaper) as a daily routine, reporting news of local interest, government policy and statements, crime, social, and cultural functions.
2. **Moffisil Correspondents:** They are reporters in the districts.
3. **National Correspondents:** They are stationed in the country's capital (if the newspaper is published from outside the capital), and the capitals of various States.
4. **Foreign Correspondents:** They supply news to their papers from important foreign countries.

On the basis of reporting or write-up, there are three kinds of reporters:

1. The reporter who writes what he sees.
2. The interpretative reporter who writes what he sees and what he understands to be its meaning.
3. The expert who writes what he construes to be the meaning of what he has not seen.

The functions and duties of a news reporter are multifarious. The following are the most important among them.

1. News Coverage:

The primary function of a reporter is coverage of news and reporting. It is the most prized and most exciting job in journalism. At the same time, it is the most difficult, bothersome, hazardous and time-consuming. A reporter has to collect news of all sorts from all possible sources, write out news stories, that is, narrative accounts and transmit them speedily to his newspaper office for processing and publication.

2. Various types of Reporting:

As news gatherer, a reporter has to undertake all types of assignments. He has to be always on the move. He has to visit all kinds of places and meet all sorts of people. His work ranges from reporting contemporary events to feature writing. He has to cover daily happenings in various fields- civil matters, social life, politics and science.

3. Reporting of civil matters:

Junior reporters cover the local news. They report local events, functions, fairs, social activities, etc. They have to maintain contacts with the government administration, business houses, courts, hospitals, the police and other social organizations. As soon as they get hint of news, they rush to the spot. They investigate and dig for news.

4. Covering Legislative Proceedings:

Senior news reporters cover legislative or parliamentary proceedings, interviews

with ministers and political leaders. They attend press conferences. They analyse political trends and write about them.

5. Dealing with Judicial matters :

Reporters have to give special attention to police cases and court proceedings as they provide news stories of human interest and offer scope for crime reporting and investigative journalism. Reporters must be conversant with legal procedure and avoid contempt of court. They should not indulge in sensationalism. They should write about crime stories with objectivity and avoid vulgarity.

6. Sports Coverage:

Sports news is a major attraction for people. Sports reporters have to cover local, national and international sports and games. The increasing public interest in sports has enhanced the value of sports writers, who have to be versatile in reporting all kinds of games and sports activities. They must write in smooth and flowing language; their write-ups should make enjoyable reading.

7. Political Reporting:

The job of a political reporter is to obtain political information. This is a very responsible and ticklish job. Coverage of political processions and meetings must be presented faithfully, without distortion. Often speakers may deny what they have said, feeling embarrassed at the sight of their utterances in print. They demand corrections, thus placing reporters in trouble. So reporters must be very careful. Political sketch-writing has become popular. The ritual performances of public life should be cleverly stage-managed by reporters.

8. Finance Reporting:

Financial matters have assumed great importance now, and reporters have to come out with the latest position in prices of essential commodities, market conditions, stocks and shares, business houses and financial transactions. A reporter has to use his acumen in reporting matters relating to finance. He has to maintain a close contact with financial institutions. Analysis of company reports involves a combination of artistic and scientific skills.

9. Industrial Reporting:

Public sector undertakings and private industries are always in the news. A reporter has to keep a watchful eye on them for news about their achievements, short – falls, mismanagement, exploitation, labour problems, activities of trade unions, strikes, lock-outs,

settlements, etc. Reporters must maintain a rapport with the managements as well as the working classes.

It is the duty of every reporter to present a neat and clean copy of his news stories. He should follow the simple and direct style of natural expression and sincerity to mirror things as they are. He should be objective and unbiased. He should follow professional ethics in his work. He should not divulge secrets and betray people who repose confidence in him. He should eschew scandal – mongering and maintain decency in his write-ups. He should strive to highlight human values and uphold human rights.

In brief, a reporter has to be in touch with all walks of life under all sorts of conditions. He goes out to see, find and know about the latest events and happenings, and then writes about them in his news paper. The newspaper today is a reflex of the day – to – day life and this reflex is made possible through the reporter’s news stories. A newspaper’s reputation and credibility depend largely on its reporters. They can make or destroy a newspaper which educates and informs its readers on what is happening around them in the country and in the world. They are the purveyors of news and views, without inhibition or bias.

Attributes of a good reporter.

An American writer prescribes the following qualities for a successful reporter (and a sub – editor as well, in many respects)

1. News Sense

It is the basic quality of newsmen. Every reporter must have a nose for news. He must have the instinct and institution to ferret out news from various sources. He should be able to compare various news values and decide on the order of priorities.

2. Clarity

A reporter should have clarity of mind and expression. A person who is confused himself cannot tell a story to others. A reporter must have clear thinking and the ability to express his thoughts well in both writing and speech.

3. Objectivity

A reporter should aim at objectivity while dealing with a story. He should not allow his personal bias r ideas to colour a story. He should not take sides but try to cover all the different view points to achieve balance in the story.

4. Accuracy

A reporter should strive for accuracy. Guesses and surmises may lead to disasters. So he must check and re – check facts. The credibility of a reporter and the reputation of his newspaper are proportional to the veracity of the reports.

5. Curiosity

A reporter must have an insatiable curiosity. It leads to the discovery of facts and the production of better stories.

6. Alertness

A reporter should always be alert while dealing with his subjects. Many major news breaks in the past were possible because of the alertness of reporters.

7. Speed

In the present world speed matters are welcomed everywhere. A reporter must work efficiently at top speed. He must be able to handle accidents, disasters and other spot news at hectic speed. He should think fast, decide fast and write fast as he has to meet deadlines.

8. Scepticism

A reporter should not take anything for granted. He should be vigilant as many forces constantly try to use him for vested interests. He should be like doubting Thomas to avoid any trap.

9. Calmness

A reporter has to work in trying circumstances. He has to remain calm and composed in most exciting and tragic circumstances. He should control anger and emotional outbursts.

10. Patience

It helps a reporter in a big way to endure waiting, provocation, injustice, suffering or any of the unpleasant vicissitudes of time and life.

11. Punctuality

It is a must for a reporter. If he is unpunctual, often he may miss the bus, that is lose some important news

12. Ingenuity

A reporter must strive constantly for originality in news gathering procedures, especially in investigative reporting.

13. Imagination

This creative mental faculty helps a reporter in writing interesting stories that retain the reader's interest. A reporter can be descriptive but not deceptive.

14. Contacts with People

A reporter must build up contacts with people who may be important sources of news. He must maintain healthy relations with the police and high officials.

15. Integrity

It is an eminent virtue and implies understanding, honesty and strict adherence to a stern code of ethics. It is important for all journalists, especially reporters as they are more exposed to temptations than others.

16. Fearlessness and Frankness

These qualities help reporters in asking unpleasant questions and taking risks to find out truth. Nobody gives out facts on a platter. The reporter has to probe, question and exercise his power of deduction to get a good story.

17. Tactfulness

A reporter should have the ability to handle sensitive people and situations gracefully without wounding anybody's feelings. He should be considerate and should not embarrass, upset or offend anybody. He should have an understanding of human behavior and emotions. This will help him in developing contacts which are so essential for news gathering.

18. Initiative

A reporter should have an outgoing nature with push and drive. A meek, retiring or shy person is not fit for reporting.

19. Mobility

A reporter should not hesitate to travel long distances to collect news stories. He should frequent his news sources with untiring zeal. It will help him get a constant supply of news.

20. Diligence

The reporter's job requires painstaking exertion. Intense care and effort, hard work and dedication, intelligence and industry make a successful reporter.

21. In brief, a reporter has to be a keen observer, a tenacious detective and a bit of a lawyer so as not to libel anyone. A most efficient reporter is one who combines a keen news sense with the power of adequate literary expression. He

must make his copy pulse with life and be full of interest for the readers. His stories should be bright and sparkling, and make people think and talk.

Crime Reporting

Crime reporting is the most talked – about phenomenon in the journalistic world today. It assumes great importance in a democracy like India. It plays a significant role in socio-political affairs. The term ‘Crime reporting’ can be applied to any story which

1. Deals with a serious subject
2. involves obstacles which make gathering information on the subject difficult
3. fully explains or explores the significance of the subject.

Crime reporting deals with issues and conditions rather than incidents and events. It requires more patience and persistence. The reporter is tied up with records. He has to work day in and day out to resolve mysteries. It is a digging assignment. Crime reporting is what results from digging out facts beneath the surface. It requires a scientific approach.

Crime reporting is not leaking out government budgets or digging out official secrets. At its best, it is master detective work into misdeeds against public interest. It is a time – consuming, costly and risky job, but it pays off rich dividends in terms of public welfare.

Procedures

A crime reporter starts off with a supposition that there is more to an event than meets the eye, and follows it up. For instance, the former President Nixon’s Watergate scandal or the present President Clinton’s sex scandal in the United States was set off by a few stray facts that reporters chose to follow up with hound – like tenacity. In India some years ago, a brief news item about prisoners being blinded in Bhagalpur induced the editors of both ‘ Sunday’ and ‘ The Indian Express’ to make further enquiries which unearthed facts that shocked the public. The numerous scams that have rocked the nation in recent times have been exposed in one way or another by active crime reporters following some clues.

A lot of planning and preparation is required of the investigation is on a large scale involving some major government department or big business or multinational company or corporation or some prominent political party or politician or some mafia king or other gangs involved in illegal activities.

Big crime stories need painstaking probing and gathering of facts over weeks or months, and the publication of the findings may lead to litigation. These are results of well – planned efforts to uncover something wrong in the social, economic, political and administrative

system. The job of the crime reporter is to expose the wrong thing in the system to public notice for the sake of public welfare.

Before proceeding with an investigative case, the editor will ask a reporter or group of reporters to prepare a background note on possibilities regarding risks, rewards and investment. If he considers it worthwhile, he will give the go – ahead signal.

The Crime reporter or the team of reporters will collect all available data or information from key sources. They will follow all clues and dig out facts by adopting all ingenious methods. They will scan all materials, analyse all facts and draw reasonable conclusions.

When the job is complete, the story is assessed once again, involving legal advisers. If the evidence is enough, the story is published. The reactions of the public as well as the implicated party must be watched, and preparations must be made to deal with any eventuality. Points may be raised by the affected party regarding validity of evidence. Some legal action may be initiated against the newspaper. The reporters involved in the investigation may have to continue their work to get further information or evidence to counter the moves of the affected party.

A newspaper or magazine that wants to go for crime reporting on a continuous basis should have a separate team of reporters headed by a senior member of the staff. They should be on the lookout for possibilities of crime projects. Major sources of such possibilities are analysis of government reports, audit reports, annual reports of various organizations, union officials, political leaders, etc. Some newspapers and magazines automatically start getting tips for crime reports once they publish such reports. There are some honest people in all organizations, who do not want to be party to corruption and other malpractices. Such people may come directly to the reporter who has made his name as crime reporter. But there are also some people who would try to use him to malign somebody unnecessarily. One has to be very careful while dealing with the tips of such people.

A crime reporter should be like a judge, not like a public prosecutor. He should be fair and objective in his assessment of facts. He should be absolutely unbiased.

Some Useful Guidelines for Crime Reporters

1. Don't overlook a tip from any source. Some of the best leads may come from the tips that don't look promising.
2. Stay within the law. Don't attempt to open safes or burglarise offices for evidence, as, is shown in films.
3. Don't be a policeman.
4. Check the evidence and keep checking as you go along.

5. When things get difficult, don't despair. Keep going as investigation is a long – term process, not an instant affair.
6. Suspect your findings until you are absolutely certain, since you cannot compromise with accuracy of truth.
7. In writing the investigative report, make sure you are leading the reader logically and quickly from point t point, towards the climax and the end of the story.

Crime reporting should be constructive, not destructive. It should not aim at prying into the private life of bigshots and film stars, pandering to people's vulgar tastes for commercial purposes. It should not turn into detestable yellow journalism. Its purpose should be the exposure of wrongs with a view to setting right the misdeeds of individuals, groups, politicians, government administration or anti-social elements, and to promote public welfare. It should uncover not only immoral or illegal actions but als situations which need public attention. 'It is a misconception' , says a writer, ' to think it is only reporting official corruption and scandal. Good investigative reporting may be examining bad conditions of roads or exposing an issue connected with the management of a school or college. You may contribute something more long lasting and more worthwhile by the kind of issue oriented crime reporting than you could through scandal hunting'. The editor of a newspaper or magazine ought to be working out not just the problems of scandal and corruption but the problems of his area and expose them to the public.

With curiosity to know the conditions in Thikar Central jail, Delhi, Ashwini Sarin of the Express News Service got himself jailed there on a minor charge, investigated the conditions through personal experience and brought out a first – hand investigative report on the terrible conditions inside, which created public awakening and led to some prison reforms. It is a model for effective and purposeful investigative reporting.

Books for Reference:

1. " Professional Journalism" M.V. Kamath
2. " Mass Communication in India" Keval J. Kumar
3. "Fundamentals of Journalism" N. Muthukrishnan and Dr. Sheila
4. " Basic Journalism" Rangaswami Parthasarathy

Important Questions

1. Write an essay describing any ten categories of news.
2. Write a brief essay on the geneology of News Agencies.
3. What are the essentials requirements of a good Sub – editor?
4. The editor is a kingpin of a newspaper - Discuss.
5. Write a short note on the role of the Press.
6. ‘Crime Reporting’ is a digging assignment - Do you agree?
7. Write an essay on the ‘ Freedom of the Press’.
8. Give a detailed account of the Journalistic ethics.